

# ~ *United States Congress* ~

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## **LAWMAKERS, SENIORS, SOLDIERS RALLY FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF MEDICARE BILL**

*Bipartisan event boosts Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act*

**Washington, DC** – This afternoon, leading supporters of key Medicare legislation rallied with seniors and military members calling for enactment of the bill into law without delay. The House and Senate passed the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act by overwhelming majorities to reverse a planned 10.6 percent physician payment cut that could block access to health care for seniors on Medicare and military families using the TRICARE system. President Bush vetoed the bill today, requiring both chambers of Congress to vote on whether to override the veto and make the bill law. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services began implementing the cuts fully today.

As the House prepared to vote to override the President's veto of the bill, leading Senators and Representatives made the following comments:

**“Folks in my home state of Montana know I’m going to do what’s right, and vote to make the Medicare bill law, for Montana seniors and for our 32,000 folks in TRICARE too,”** said Finance Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.). **“When we reverse cuts that are keeping seniors and military families from seeing their doctors and when we provide four billion dollars to help rural and low-income seniors get the health care they need, that will be a victory for millions of people in this country. And that victory for seniors and military families will happen because we stood together, because Senators and Representatives of all parties said, let’s do what’s right.”**

**“By signing this legislation into law, President Bush had a historic opportunity - and, I believe, an obligation – to ensure that elderly and disabled Americans have access to their doctors and to the medical care they need and deserve,”** said House Energy and Commerce Chairman John Dingell (D-Mich.).

**This is a critical piece of bipartisan legislation to improve the Medicare system, and ensure that millions of seniors, military families and other beneficiaries get the health care they need and deserve,”** said House Ways & Means Chairman Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.). **“The President’s veto only served to further delay the relief in this bill. Congress will vote today to override the President’s veto, and send a strong message to the nation that the needs of millions of beneficiaries should come before the needs of the insurance industry.**

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**“The domestic legacy of this President is going to be measured by his unrelenting attacks and cavalier attitude toward health care for our children, seniors – and now military families. It would appear that the overwhelming, bipartisan support for this bill has fallen on deaf ears at the White House. That’s regrettable and incredibly disappointing to me,”** Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) said. **“At a time of increasing economic uncertainty it should be a unanimous and bipartisan goal to bring peace of mind to seniors and military families who are struggling to make ends meet – especially when it comes to health care. Congress will do what’s right by those enrolled in Medicare and TRICARE, even if the President won’t.”**

**“I am pleased to be here in support of the bipartisan Medicare bill,”** Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kans.) said. **“This is a good bill for seniors, military families and our health care providers. It is clear that all of the support from the AARP, American Legion and all of the other health provider and patient groups got us the strong support needed to get us one step closer to the finish line. I am disappointed the President vetoed this bill, but I look forward to Congress quickly overriding his veto and making this bill a reality. It is the right thing to do for seniors, military families and health providers.”**

**“We owe our seniors and all who serve our country the security to know that the health care rug won’t be pulled out from underneath them,”** said Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) **Decades ago we made them a promise—a promise they have counted on in planning their financial futures. It’s not a promise we can or should break.”**

Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.) said, **“It is unfortunate the President chose to veto a bipartisan bill that would provide critical support for our health care providers, improve care and access for low-income Medicare beneficiaries, and make much-needed reforms to Medicare Advantage programs. Congress put partisan politics aside and recognized our responsibility to our seniors, military families, and providers; it is evident we must do so again and overturn the President’s misguided veto.”**

**“This bi-partisan bill strikes the right balance between caring for our seniors by improving Medicare and ensuring doctors are available to treat them,”** said Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.). **“I hope my colleagues will continue to stand for America’s seniors and override this veto.”**

**“The bipartisan Medicare bill that we crafted in the Finance Committee, and which we passed in the nick of time, will avert a health care train wreck for America’s seniors, doctors, and service members,”** said Sen. Ken Salazar (D-Colo.). **“The President had the chance to do what’s right, sign the bill, and prevent these devastating cuts, but he didn’t. Now it’s up to us, again, to stand strong with America’s seniors, families, and doctors and pass this bill over the President’s objections.”**

**“Folks who’ve worked hard and played by the rules all their lives should have access to the care they need,”** said Rep. Darlene Hooley (D-Ore). **“The American people support a veto override, and want us to act quickly on pocketbook issues in these troubled economic times.”**

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